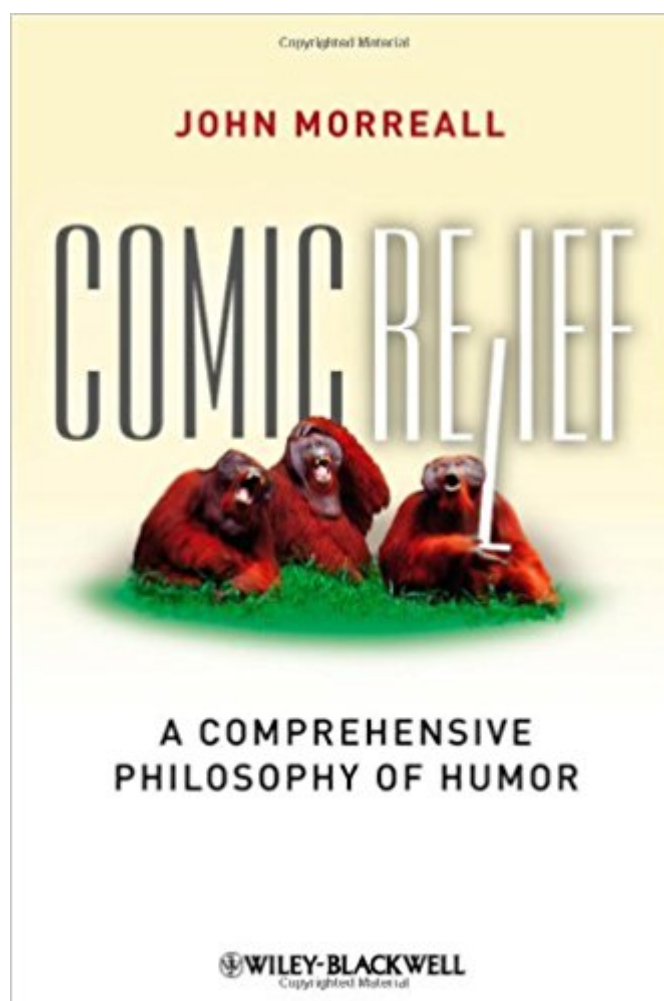


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# Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy Of Humor (New Directions In Aesthetics, No. 9)



## Synopsis

Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor develops an inclusive theory that integrates psychological, aesthetic, and ethical issues relating to humor Offers an enlightening and accessible foray into the serious business of humor Reveals how standard theories of humor fail to explain its true nature and actually support traditional prejudices against humor as being antisocial, irrational, and foolish Argues that humor's benefits overlap significantly with those of philosophy Includes a foreword by Robert Mankoff, Cartoon Editor of The New Yorker

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"As an intelligent treatment of what humor is and what it means, this work raises significant questions and proposes plausible answers." (CHOICE, September 2010)

"Of all of the humor scholars I know, John Morreall is the best at making original, fascinating, and useful observations. We should all be grateful that in Comic Relief he has once more demonstrated--in his witty and accessible style--that the play ethic is as important as the work ethic."  
—Don L. F. Nilsen, International Society for Humor Studies "Comic Relief is an engaging, wide-ranging discussion of how humor is defined within the disciplines of philosophy and history, as well as a brilliant and comprehensive overview of how it is used today. This book is a superb addition to the body of genuinely important works on humor."  
—Regina Barreca, University of Connecticut

This was a required book for a class, *The Psychology of Humor*, that I took as a humanities requirement. But, it is not like a textbook, at all. It is a very interesting view of how we use humor and laughter. He also tells the history of humor, and I learned a lot of interesting things about humor that I didn't expect to learn. It is much better than the textbook that was also required for the class.

reading it

would order again

A friend recommended this book so I thought I'd check it out--I'm really interested in humor and jokes but it's hard to find a satisfactory, richly developed theory of laughter. Plenty of people have tried, and the first chapters, which exhaustively list various thinkers' attempts to theorize laughter throughout history and also point out their flaws and shortcomings, are very useful and illuminating. But John Morreall doesn't offer a theory to outdo them. It seems like he's mainly restating the obvious parts of other thinkers' work (he says in the intro that he's a public speaker and consultant who gives talks to corporate meetings about humor--and the way he writes and thinks seems better suited to that kind of work than producing the "comprehensive philosophy" that the title promises). Maybe I wasn't reading close enough into his ideas, but I really lost interest when he spent several pages trying to explain why a rape joke isn't offensive.

book was bought for a student and is used daily in class

I've often wondered what makes us laugh. This book will give me some insights into what makes us tick and why we laugh at some things and frown at others.

This book of Professor Morreall's is a great read. His theory and basic pattern in humor--The playful enjoyment of a cognitive shift is expressed in laughter--is more realistic than conventional superiority, incongruity and relief theories. In this great book, Professor Morreall explored many of the benefits of humor. In Chapter 3, we saw how its emotional disengagement promotes rationality and mental flexibility. The contrast of comedy with tragedy in Chapter 4 showed how comedy fosters a more rational, critical, and creative attitude that serves us better in the modern world. It makes us sensitive to the complexity of life; it enhances our ability to deal with novelty and disorder, and it

challenges elitism, militarism, and sexism. In Chapter 6, he examined some intellectual and moral virtues promoted by humor: open-mindedness, divergent thinking, critical thinking, self-transcendence, honesty with oneself, patience, tolerance, graciousness, humility, perseverance, and courage. Then in Chapter 7, he compared humor to philosophy in promoting a curious, imaginative, critical attitude in which we see our lives in perspective. Enjoy reading!

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